

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

BY

GOETHE.

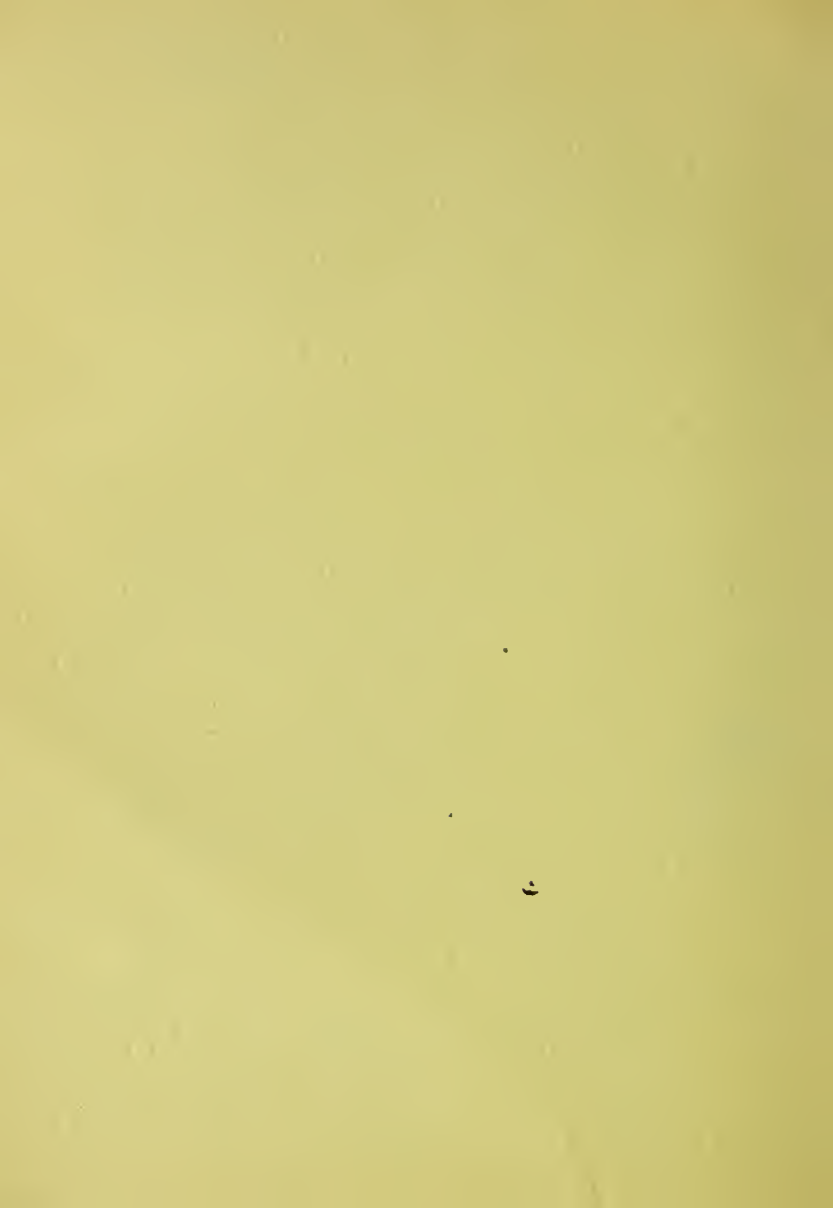
TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

FREDERICK BUTLER.

READING, PENNSYLVANIA,

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Press of
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IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

(A DRAMA.)

Personæ.

IPHIGENIA.

THOAS, KING OF TAURIS.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

ARKAS.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Grove before the Temple of Diana.*

Iph. Here in thy shadow, old and sacred grove,
Dense-leaved, whose crested tops sway to the breeze,—
As in Diana's quiet sanctuary,
E'en now I tread with shuddering sense of dread,
As though I now first trod this hallowed ground
And was not wont in spirit here to muse.
For many a year a higher power has kept
Me here concealed ; obedient I submit :
Yet ever, as at first, my soul's estranged.
For Oh ! the sea keeps me from those I love
And on the shore the live long day I stand,
In spirit seeking Greece, my native land ;
And ever 'gainst my sighs the roaring waves
Bring back a hollow sound. Unhappy he
Who far from home and kin, in solitude

A fruitless life exhales ! Him grief consumes
And from his lips the cup of present joy
Removes. His thoughts, like swarming bees, fly on
His father's halls to reach, where first the sun
Revealed to him the heavens, where with mates
Of childhood's happy days, close and more close
The bands of love were drawn. Not with the gods
Do I contend ; yet woman's lot is sad.
In peace and war man ever reigns supreme,
And in a foreign land can hew his way.
Possessions cheer him, victory crowns his head,
A glorious death awaits him at life's close.
How narrow is the sphere of womankind !
A boorish husband to obey perforce,
Her duty and her cheer. How wretched she
When cruel fate pursues her in her flight !
So Thoas, noble man, doth hold me here
A slave, in bonds of holy servitude.
Oh ! shame ! Must I confess to thee Oh ! Goddess,
Deliv'rer mine, that in my secret breast
Aversion to thy service dwells, wherein
Devotion should be full and free ? Yet now
In thee I've hoped and still do hope in thee,
Diana, in whose tender, holy arms
The out-cast daughter of the greatest king
Was safely borne away. Yea, daughter Zeus',
If thou didst wring the heart of that proud man,
Demanding then his child for sacrifice,
And he his dearest to thine altar brought,—
If now the godlike Agamemnon thou
From Troy's encircling walls hast safe restored,
With glory, to his native land,—the wife

And son, Electra and the beauteous hoards
Hast well preserved for him ; so grant that I
May once again to mine at last return ;
As thou hast saved me from an awful death
So save me now from this abhorred life,
To me a second death.

SCENE II. IPHIGENIA. ARKAS.

Arkas. The king hath sent me hither and presents
A health and greeting to Diana's priestess.
This is the day that Tauris celebrates,
And thanks the gods for victories new and strange.
I speed before the king and all his host
To tell thee that he comes, his army's nigh.

Iph. We are prepared right worth'ly to receive them,
And our goddess turns an aspect kind
On offerings made by 'Thoas' willing hands.

Arkas. Could I but see thine aspect cheered with light,
Thou worthy priestess of this honored shrine,
Oh, holy virgin, then thy glance benign,
On us, on all, with brighter radiance beaming,
A token were of good ! But now doth grief
Mysterious shroud thine inmost soul in gloom.
In vain we've waited all these weary years
To hear one word of comfort from thy breast.
As long as I have known thee in this place
This is the glance 'neath which I ever shrink
With dread ; and as with bands of steel thy soul
Is held within thy bosom firmly bound.

Iph. As well befits the exiled, orphaned one.

Arkas. Deem'st thou thyself an exile here—an orphan ?

Iph. Can foreign strands be native lands for us?

Arkas. Foreign to thee thy native land became.

Iph. 'Tis so ; hence bleeds my wounded heart unstanched.

In early youth ere yet th' unfolding mind
Perceived parental bonds and family ties,
E'en when the tender shoots, conjoined and lovely,
Strove from the root of parent stem to rise,
E'en then alas ! the curse descending fell
And severing me from mine, with ruthless blow
The union tore asunder. Vanished then
Best joy of youth and weal of early years.
Thou saved, the merest shadow of myself
I was, and ne'er again within my breast
Welled up the living springs of fresh desire.

Arkas. If thus unhappy thou thyself wilt name
Then truly I dare name thee thankless too.

Iph. Thanks have you aye.

Arkas. But not unblemished thanks,

Whose virtue 'tis with kindness to requite ;
To show the host a joyous countenance,
A sign to him of a contented life
And loving heart. When many years ago
A deep mysterious fate to this our fane
Brought thee, then Thoas came, as one God-given,
To meet thee here with reverence and obeisance.
Friendly and kind thou foundest then this shore,
Which erst with dread each hapless stranger filled ;
Before thee none set foot upon this land,
Who fell not prone on Dian's altar stairs
A bloody sacrifice :—such custom ruled.

Iph. It is not all of life to freely breathe ;
What life is this, that in this holy place

I like a ghost beside the grave must mourn.
Can that be called a conscious happy life
When every day in fruitless dreaming spent
Is but the prelude to that dreadful day
When, wrapt oblivious, on Lethean shores
The mournful legions of the lost are ranked?
A useless life is but an early death;
Such woman's fate, alas! is mine alone.

Arkas. The noble pride which bars contentment's way
I can forgive, tho' much I pity thee;
It robs thee of enjoyment of thy life.
And nothing hast thou done since coming here?
Who then the king's dark soul has cheered with light?
Whose soft persuasive voice from year to year
Has stayed the cruel hand of custom old
Which at Diana's altar called for blood
Of every stranger? Who from certain death
Released the captives and so oft restored
Them to their native land? Her wrath appeased,
Tho' thus deprived of bloody sacrifice,
Hath not Diana heard thy tender prayer?
And doth not victory hover o'er the host
In joyous flight, and hasten on before?
Hath not a better lot befallen each,
Now that the king, our ruler wise and brave,
Basks in the sunshine of thy presence mild
And light for us hath made the load of duty
In silence to obey? Canst thou lament
That life as fruitless which on thousands drops
A dew balsamic, and unfailing source
Of joy becomes to animate anew
The people whom a god hath blessed in thee—

And on th' inhospitable shore of death
The stranger saves and sends him home in peace ?

Iph. In vaster vision of the field beyond,
The least is lost to view and seems as naught.

Arkas. Dost praise the man who values not his work ?

Iph. Who weighs his deeds is held in light esteem.

Arkas. He too, who proud, true worth esteemeth not,
As well as he who idly lauds the false.
Believe me and heed well the word of one
In truth and honor to thy service bound :
When on this day the king would speak to thee,
Enkindle thou his thought with thy keen wit.

Iph. Thou grievest me with every kindly word,
Oft have I sought his tiresome plea to evade.

Arkas. Consider what thou dost and how to thrive.
E'er since the king hath lost his son in death,
He trusts but few of all his former friends
And e'en these few no longer as of old.
Suspicious, he in every noble's son
Successor to his kingdom sees : he fears
Old age, helpless, alone, perchance he fears
Revolt audacious and untimely death.
The Scythian recks not of polite address,
Nor does the king. Accustomed to command
And act, he knows not how to turn his speech
In fine set phrase, by indirection slow
His purpose to unfold. Increase not thou
The burden of his tongue by coy refusal,
By false conception purposely assumed.
Complaisant go to meet him half the way.

Iph. Shall I then hasten that which threatens me ?

Arkas. Wilt thou his wooing call a threat ?

Iph. Before all else a threat most terrible.

Arkas. Confide in him when he inclines to thee.

Iph. When first he doth my soul from fear set free.

Arkas. Why dost thine origin from him conceal?

Iph. In mystery a priestess loves to dwell.

Arkas. No mystery should be about the king.

E'en though he ask not why, yet still he feels
And feels it in the depths of his great soul,
That warily thou dost guard thyself from him.

Iph. Doth he against me foster wrath and gloom?

Arkas. It seemeth nearly so. Of thee indeed
He speaketh not, yet divers words let fall
Have me apprised that rooted in his mind
The wish is held to have thee for his own. Leave,
Oh, leave him not abandoned to himself!
Lest melancholy ripen in his breast
And bring upon thee horror and dismay,
And thou too late my honest words wilt rue.

Iph. How? Meditates the king, what no true man
Who loves his name and renders to the gods
Their reverence due, should ever hold in thought?
Thinks he with violence to drag me hence
From th'altar to his bed? On all the gods
I call and chiefly on Diana chaste,
The virgin goddess resolute, who sure
Will swiftly come her priestess to defend.

Arkas. Be calm! No fever in the blood inflames
The king to execute so rash a deed
Of untamed youth. His resolution harsh
I fear is set on other means his end
Unchecked to reach; firm and immovable
He's fixed. I pray thee therefore, if no more

Thou canst bestow, thou fail not to impart
To him thy confidence and gratitude.

Iph. Oh say, I beg, what more is known to thee.

Arkas. Learn it from him. I see the king approach :
Thou dost revere him, and thine own true heart
Doth prompt thee to bestow a greeting kind
And cordial. A noble, generous man
By woman's gentle speech is guided far.

Iph. In truth, this trusty friend's advice to heed,
(*alone*) I know not how ; yet gladly I avow,
That favors of the king a grateful word
From me demand. Whate'er his highness please,
My sole wish is to answer him with truth.

SCENE III. IPHIGENIA. THOAS.

Iph. With regal gifts the goddess thee endow !
May she with victory and glory crown thee,
And riches and the welfare of thy realm,
And every pious wish in fulness grant !
That as thy careful sway extends o'er all,
So may the rarest bliss of all be thine.

Thoas. Content were I, if my own people praised me.
What I have gained, by others is enjoyed
More amply than by me. Most fortunate
Is he, who, be he king or commoner,
Finds all things in his house established well.
In my deep grief thou didst participate
When at my side, the hostile sword bereft
Me of my son, the last and best of all.
As long as vengeful fury filled my soul
I recked not of my hearth all desolate.

But now, that sated, I return, the foe
Of his possessions spoiled, my son avenged,
Nothing at home remains to cheer my heart.
The glad obedience which once I saw
In every eye shine forth, is now dedimmed
With care, and with dejected mien is mute.
What store the future hath, is each one's thought :
Obeys the childless king, because he must.
Now then I come to-day within this fane,
Oft trod by me, to pray for victory,
As well for victory to offer thanks.
A wish, long held, I in my bosom bear,
To thee not new nor unforseen : I hope
To lead thee hence, a bride, to my abode,
To bless my people and myself to bless.

Iph. For one unknown thy proffer is too high,
O king. Before thee stands the fugitive
Ashamed, who seeks naught else upon this shore
But safety and repose, which thou hast given.

Thoas. By none would it be held as right and just
That thou in mystery of thy origin
Dost ever veil thyself from me and mine.
This shore in strangers doth inspire dread ;
Necessity and law demand it both.
From thee alone, who every pious right
In fulness doth enjoy, a guest received
By us with favour, who doth spend her days
According to her own good will and choice,
From thee I hoped to have the confidence
Which every faithful host may well expect.

Iph. If I my father's name and home have hid,
Oh, King : 'twas due to my perplexity,

Not my mistrust. If thou, alas ! didst know
Who stands before thee and what cursed head
Thou nourishest and dost protect, perchance
A horror would thy great heart strangely chill
And thou, instead of offering me thy throne
To share, wouldst drive me hence betimes expelled
Out of thy realm ; perchance,—ere destiny
Should fix for me the day of my return,
With joy my own to meet, and see the end
Of all my wanderings,—wouldst thrust me on
To wretchedness which everywhere awaits
The outcast rover as with icy hand
The affrighted stranger greets the vagabond.

Thoas. Whate'er the counsel of the gods involve,
Whate'er their purpose be concerning thee
And thine own house, yet since thou dwell'st with us
And privilege of pious guest enjoyest,
No lack I've felt in blessings from above.
'Twere not an easy task me to convince
That I in thee a guilty head protect.

Iph. Thy benefactions bless thee, not thy guest.

Thoas. What's done to wicked ones is never blest ;
Therefore thy secrets and denials cease ;
With no injustice make I this demand.
Into my hands the goddess thee delivered.
As thou to her wast holy, so wast thou
To me. Henceforward be her nod my law.
If thou canst hope to see thy home again
Then I release thee from all further claim.
Yet now to thee the way's forever barred,
And be thy race expelled from out the land
Or through perdition vast forever lost,

So art thou mine by more than one plain law.
Speak freely then, thou know'st I'll naught reveal.

Iph. From ancient ban unwillingly the tongue
Is loosed, a long-kept secret to disclose
At last, which, once confided, doth forsake,
Ne'er to return, its dwelling place secure
Within the soul's profoundest depths,—goes forth
To hurt or save, as will the gods above.
Know then : I'm sprung from race of Tantalus.

Thoas. Thou utterest a pregnant word unmoved.
Dost thou name him as thy progenitor,
Who, world-famed, once in favour high was held
By all the gods? Is it that Tantalus
Whom Jove to counsel and his table drew,
In whose well-knit discourse, of meaning full
And wide experience the gods themselves
As in an oracle delighted were?

Iph. E'en he it is ; but gods should ne'er with men
Associate as equals with themselves ;
For mortal man is far too weak, his place
In unaccustomed heights undazed to hold.
Ignoble was he not and traitor none :
Too great to be a slave and yet mere man
In company of mighty, thundering Jove.
His fault was human then ; its doom severe,
And poets sing : Through pride and perfidy
He fell headlong, disgraced, from festive board
Of Jove, adown to ancient Tartarus.
Alas, and his whole race have borne their hate !

Thoas. Borne for their fore-bear's guilt or for their own?

Iph. 'Tis true, to all his sons and grandsons fell,
By sure inheritance, the breast of strength

And powerful pith of Titans ; yet the god
 Around their foreheads forged a band of brass,
 And from their furtive, gloomy glance concealed
 The law of reason, wisdom, self-control.
 With them each separate wish absorbed the soul,
 And boundless ranged their fury far and near.
 First Pelops, he whose will all things essayed,
 Beloved son of Tantalus, obtained
 Through treachery and blood, that peerless dame,
 The Cœnomæan Hippodamia.
 Her consort's wish to fill she bore two sons,
 Thyestes, Atreus. With envy they
 Observed their father's love for's eldest son,
 Born of a former wife. In hatred joined
 The pair in secret ventured their first deed
 In fratricide. On Hippodamia
 The father rests suspicion of the crime,
 And in his rage demands of her his son.
 She slays herself—

Thoas.

Art dumb? Proceed!

Repent not of thy trust reposed in me : Speak !

Iph.

How happy he who gladly calls to mind
 His ancestors, recounts with pride their deeds
 And fame, and secretly exults to see
 Himself at end of this illustrious line !
 It falls not to a single race alike,
 Now demigods, now monsters to beget ;
 For first a line of evil ones, or good,
 Brings forth to view at last a progeny
 Of horror or of joy. Their father dead,
 Atreus and Thyest' in common rule
 The city held. The concord could not long

Abide. Thyestes soon his brother's bed
Dishonored. Avenging Atreus drove him forth
Out of the realm. Long time before, Thyestes,
On mischief bent, with purpose fell intent,
Had stolen his brother's son, and secretly
With much caress had raised him as his own.
He fills his breast with fury and revenge
And sends him to the palace of the king
To slay, as uncle, his own royal sire.
The purpose of the youth disclosed, the king
Upon the would-be murderer inflicts
A cruel punishment, believing then
That his own brother's son is slain. Too late
He learns, who perishes in torments there
Before his drunken eyes. Revengeful fire
Within his breast to quench, in silence he
Resolves on deed unheard before. He seems
Resigned, indifferent, appeased,—allures
His brother with his sons, into the realm
Again, lays hold upon the youthful twain,
Slays them and sets the loathsome, horrid food
Before the father at the first repast.
Now when Thyestes' hunger was appeased
With his own flesh, oppressed with gloom, and sad,
He asks to see his boys, whose tread, whose voice
At threshold of the hall he seems to hear,—
Then Atreus with horrid grin throws down
To him the head and feet of those he slew—
With horror thou dost turn thy face, oh, king !
So let the sun in heaven turn his face,
And chariot turn from his eternal course !
These are thy priestess' ancestors, oh, king.

And many a fateful, hapless doom of men,
And many a deed of the perverted mind,
Night, with her heavy wings, o'erspreads and grants
Us dimly to behold in hideous gloom.

Thoas. So, too, in silence let them rest. Enough
Of horrors! Yet declare, through what strange freak
Hast thou from such wild stem burst forth to view.

Iph. Atreus' eldest son was Agamemnon;
He is my father. Yet, I dare to say it,
In him have I, e'er since my earliest days,
A pattern of the perfect man beheld.
To him was I by Clytæmnesta brought,
Firstling of love; Electra then. In peace
The king bore sway, and Tantal's house at last
Long needed rest enjoyed. A son alone
Was wanting to complete the parents' bliss,
And scarce was this desire fulfilled and 'twixt
The sisters both, Orestes, darling child,
Grew up apace, that other ill arose
As menace to the safety of the house.
The rumor of that war has come to thee,
In which, to avenge the rape of fairest one
Of womankind, the universal might
Of Grecian chiefs besieged the walls of Troy.
Have they attained the goal of their revenge,
And won the citadel of Troy, I know not.
My father led the Grecian hosts. In Aulis
They waited for a favoring wind in vain;
For, angry with their potent chief, Diana
Delayed them in their haste, demanding then
Thro' Kalchas' mouth, the chieftain's eldest daughter.
Me with my mother they allured to camp;

They dragged me to the altar and this head
Devoted to the goddess. She appeased,
Demanded not my blood, and quick to save,
Concealed me in a cloud ; in this same temple
I first from death awoke to consciousness.
Herself I am—am Iphigenia,
Who speaks to thee, grand-child of Atreus,
Agamemnon's child—to Dian consecrate.

Thoas. No greater preference and trust I grant
To daughter of the king than to th' unknown.
My first proposal I reiterate :

Come, follow me and share whate'er I have.

Iph. How dare I venture such a step, Oh, king?
Hath not the goddess who hath saved, alone
The right to hold my consecrated life?
She hath a place of safety sought for me,
And she doth keep me for a father here
Whom she, to outward seeming, hath chastised
Enough, chastised perchance for sweetest joy
Of his old age. Perchance for me is nigh
The glad return ; and I, regarding not
Her way, should bind myself against her will?
A sign I seek, if duty 'tis to stay.

Thoas. This is the sign, that thou dost here abide.
Seek not with anxious mind such-like escape.
Few words are needed to deny a plea ;
When all is said, the " No " alone is heard.

Iph. No idle words I speak to blind the sense ;
I have revealed to thee my deepest heart,
And wilt thou not to thine own self confess,
How I with anxious mind must long to see
My father, mother, and my kindred dear?

That in the ancient halls, where sadness now
Doth oft in silence whisper soft my name,
Joy might, as for a child new born, intwine
Her fairest wreath from pillar unto pillar.
Oh, wouldst thou thither send me sailing forth !
New life thou wouldst bestow on me, on all.

Thoas. So then return ! Do what thy heart commands,
Be deaf to reason's voice and good advice.
Be woman all and to that impulse yield
Which seizes thee unchecked and drags thee on,
Now here, now there. When once a wish inflames
The breast, no sacred bond can hold her back
From the betrayer who would lure her hence
From father or betrothed, lure her from arms
Long tried and true ; and glows within her breast
The hidden fire, persuasion's golden tongue
On her is spent in vain, though true and strong.

Iph. Bethink thee, king, of thine own generous word !
Wilt thou my trust repay in terms like these ?
Thou wast prepared, methought to learn the whole.

Thoas. For th' unexpected I was not prepared ;
And yet I should have been : did I not know
That with a woman I engaged to deal ?

Iph. Chide not our miserable sex, oh king.
A woman's weapons, though not grand like thine,
Are not ignoble. This believe,—and here
I have the advantage over thee—that I
Thy happiness know better than thyself.
Not knowing thine own self nor me, thou think'st
A closer bond would bring us greater joy.
With courage high, as well as good intent,
Thou urgest me to join my hand in wedlock ;

And here I thank the gods that they have given
To me the firmness to refuse consent
To enter into bonds which they approve not.

Thoas. No god, but thine own heart it is, that speaks.

Iph. Through our own hearts alone they speak to us.

Thoas. And have I not the right to hear them too?

Iph. The storm of passion drowns the still small voice.

Thoas. The priestess hears the voice alone—not so?

Iph. Before all men, the prince should mark it well.

Thoas. Thy holy office and thy sure birthright
To sit with Jove, brings thee to gods more near
Than earthborn son of Scythian wilds.

Iph. So I

Atone the trust, which thou hast wrung from me.

Thoas. I am a man ; and better 'tis we end.

Let this then be my word : Be priestess here
To Dian, goddess who hath chosen thee ;
Yet now her pardon I implore, that I,
Unjustly and with secret qualms, till now
Have kept from her her ancient sacrifice.
The stranger fares but ill who nears our shores ;
His fate has ever been a certain death.

'Twas thou alone, who with a tenderness,
As with a charm, so captive held me fast,
That I my duty all forgot ; with joy
I saw in that same tenderness a love
Now gentle as a child's, alluring then,
Like to the silent yielding of a bride.
My senses thou didst soothe and lull to sleep,
My people's murmurings I heeded not ;
But now on me and me alone they lay
The blame of my dear son's untimely death.

No longer for thy sake will I restrain
The surging mob demanding sacrifice.

Iph.

For my sake I have ne'er desired it.
He misconceives the heavenly powers, who thinks
They thirst for blood ; he but ascribes to them
His own dark thoughts and horrid lusts. Did not
The goddess snatch me from the priest? To her
My service was more grateful than my death.

Thoas.

It suits us ill by fickle reasoning
To lightly twist and turn a holy usage
According to our whim. Thy duty do,
I shall do mine. Two strangers found concealed
Within the caverns of the shore, no good
Intending to my land, are in my power.
With them thy goddess may again receive
Her first and rightful off'ring, wanted long !
I'll send them hither, thou dost know thine office.

SCENE IV. IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

Thou hast clouds, oh, gracious savior mine,
To enwrap the guiltless persecuted one
And on winds to bear her from the arms
Of unyielding fate, o'er trackless seas,
Over earth's wide champagnes, as thou wilt.
Wise thou art and seest futurity ;
Ever present is the past to thee,
As thy light enlivens night and hovers
Resting o'er the earth's remotest glades,
So thy glance rests on thy loved ones ever.
Keep, oh ever keep my hands from blood stain !
Peace and blessing it can never bring us,

And the spectre of the fated slain one
E'er in evil hour lurks and follows
In the surly murderer's path to fright him.
But the immortal gods
Ever delight in
Virtuous races
Of men scattered far,
And they grant gladly
To mortals a respite
Of life's fleeting day ;
From their eternal seats
Kindly look down on men,
Gladly they grant to them
Visions of heaven
A while to enjoy.

ACT II.

SCENE I. ORESTES. PYLADES.

Orestes. It is the way of death on which we tread :
With every step my soul becomes more calm.
When I Apollo prayed to banish hence
This horrid escort of avenging furies,
He seemed by certain hopeful oracles
To promise help and refuge in the fane
Of his beloved sister, who holds sway
O'er Tauris ; now the event seems to portend
That with my life all pangs shall wholly cease.
How easy it will be for me, whose heart
A god contracts, the sense doth stupify,

Forever to renounce the light of day.
And if the sons of Atreus in the fight
No more shall win an end with victory crowned,—
If I like slaughtered ox in wretched death
Must bleed, as bled my father and his line,
So be it ! Better here before the altar
Than in abandoned nook, where the assassin,
Though near of kin, the deadly meshes spreads.
Leave me a while in peace, infernal powers,
Ye who like unleashed hounds with eager scent
Set on the blood, which from my steps drops down
And marks my path ! Leave me, I'll soon descend
To you ; the light of day shall not see you,
Nor me. Earth's blanket, beautiful and green,
Shall be no gambol-place for hellish masks.
I'll seek you there below ; there all are bound
By common fate in lasting, weary night.
But thou, my Pylades, thou, innocent
Companion of my guilt and banishment,
How loath am I to take thee with me hence
Before thy time, into yon mournful land !
Thy life or death for me alone hath aught
Of hope or fear.

Pylad. I am not yet prepared, like thou, Orestes,
To make descent into that realm of shades.
I still expect, through these entangled paths,
Which seem to lead us on to blackest night,
To wind up in the light of day again.
I have no thought of death ; my mind's intent
To learn what ways and means the gods devise
To compass our glad deliverance.
Death, whether feared or not, comes unrestrained.

When once the priestess raises high her hand,
In consecrating act our locks to sever,
Then shall our rescue be my only thought.
Arouse thy soul from this despondency ;
To doubt is but to hasten danger on.
We have Apollo's word : for thee prepared
In sister's sanctuary is relief
And consolation and a safe return.
The gods speak not in words equivocal,
As one oppressed with care in sadness thinks.

Orestes. Around my head in tender infancy
My mother drew the veil of life obscure ;
And so I grew apace, my father's image,—
And my mute glance was keen reproach to her
And to her paramour. How oft have I,
When sister mine, Electra, silent sat
Before the hearth, deep down in the long hall,
Pressed sad into her lap, and on her gazed
With wonder-eyes, as bitter tears she shed.
Then spoke she of our noble father much ;
Oh, how I longed to see him, be with him !
Anon to Troy I wished to go, anon
Wished his return. Then came the day—

Pylad. Oh, let hell's ministers divert themselves
With nightly rites in honor of that day !
Let mem'ry of a fairer time infuse
In us new strength to run the heroes' course.
The gods have need of many a valiant man
Upon this earth to serve their high behests.
They still do count on thee ; they sent not thee
Thy father to attend when he in rage
Descended to the gloomy shades of Orcus.

Orestes. Oh, would that I, his mantle holding fast,
Had followed him.

Pylad. Thus they who held thee back
Had care for me ; for what I had become,
Bereft of thee, I can not well divine,
Since I with thee and for thy sake alone,
From childhood on, do live and wish to live.

Orestes. Remind me not of those delightful days,
When I enjoyed the freedom of thy house,
Thy noble father wise and merciful
Did foster then the young and torpid bloom ;
When thou, companion ever gay and lively,
Like to a brightly colored butterfly
Around a darksome flower, each day didst play
Around me with a new and joyous life,
Didst so inspirit me with thy glad mood,
That I, forgetting my distress, with thee
In youth's mad whirl did riot forth unchecked.

Pylad. Then life began for me, when I loved thee.

Orestes. Say rather : my distress, and thou speak'st true.
This is the very poignancy of fate,
That I, like an infected fugitive,
Bear in my bosom secret pain and death ;
That wheresoe'er in wholesome place I tread,
Too soon emerging faces pressing round me
The painful progress of slow death betray.

Pylad. Sure I would be the first to die this death,
If e'er thy breath, Orestes, poison were.
Am I not ever full of life and spirit ?
And life and love are wings on which we rise
To noble deeds.

Orestes. To noble deeds? Oh, yes,

I know the time when we saw them before us !
When we together often chased the game
Through hill and dale and hoped some day e'en so,
Like our great ancestor, with strength and might,
With club and sword, to fall upon the track
Of monster and the robber ; then at eve
Beside the great white sea we quiet sat
Each on the other leaning, as the waves
Rolled up unto our very feet,—the world
So wide expanded all before us lay !
Then many a time indeed we drew our swords,
And future deeds thronged round us like the stars
In countless numbers from the vault of night.

Pylad.

Illimitable is the work, the soul
Strives to fulfill. We might each deed perform
In magnitude as great as it doth grow
When mouth of poet rolls it swelling down
For ages through all lands and peoples vast.
It sounds so sweet to hear a harping youth,
When resting in the stilly evening shades,
Lisp to the harp-tones our forefathers' deeds ;
And what we do, is, as it was to them,
All toil and empty job-work !
So run we after that which flies before us,
Unmindful of the way on which we tread ;
And see not our ancestors' steps beside us,
Nor mark the foot-prints of their life on earth.
With eager steps we ever chase their shadow,
Which god-like in enchanting distance far
The mountain top with golden clouds doth crown.
I value not the man who idly thinks
How he perchance may rise among his kind.

But thou, Oh youth, be thankful to the gods,
That they so soon through you so much have done.

Orestes. When they on man the joyful boon bestow,
The course of evil from his race to turn,
His kingdom to enlarge, its bounds secure,
And ancient foes in battle fall or flee,
Then let him thankful be ; for then a god
Hath granted him life's first and last desire.
On me their choice has fall'n for slaughter's work,
To be my honored mother's murderer ;
Avenging crime with crime, my doom is fixed ;
They've marked me for perdition. Now believe,
That judgment rests on house of Tantalus,
And I, the last one, shall not guiltless go,
Nor full of honors pass away.

Pylad. The gods
Avenge not on the son the father's guilt ;
Each one receives according to his deeds
His just reward, and be he good or bad.
Our parents' blessing, not their curse, descends
To us.

Orestes. Their blessing leads us not this way, it seems.

Pylad. At least the gods who dwell on high so will it.

Orestes. It is their will therefore that ruins us.

Pylad. Do thou what they command thee and await.

If thou dost safely carry hence his sister
Unto Apollo, and they both united
At Delphi dwell, revered by people there
Whose thoughts are heaven-born, then for this deed
Th' exalted pair will gracious be to thee
And rescue thee from the infernal powers.
E'en here within this holy fane none venture.

Orestes. So I at least shall have a tranquil death.

Pylad. I think quite otherwise, and not inapt
Have I combined and secretly conjoined
What's past and done with that which is to come.
Perhaps the great work has been ripening
In counsel of the gods. Diana longs
To be away from this wild barbarous shore
And all its bloody human sacrifice.
We were ordained to do this glorious deed,
On us the work is laid, and strange the way
By which we've come perforce unto these gates.

Orestes. With rare and subtle skill thou weav'st in one
The counsel of the gods and thine own wishes.

Pylad. What is man's wisdom, if it yieldeth not
Attentive ear to purposes divine?
To deed of greatest weight a god hath called
The noble man, who much hath sinned, and laid
On him what seems to us an endless task.
The hero conquers, and, his guilt atoned,
Serves gods and men, who honor him alike.

Orestes. If I am called to live and to perform,
Then let some god expel from my dull brain
The dizziness, which on the slippery path,
Besprinkled with my mother's blood, drags me
To death. Let him with gracious hand estop
The springs which from my mother's gaping wounds
Flow towards me and forever stain my soul.

Pylad. Await it calmly! Thou augmentst the ill
And takest on thyself the Furies' part.
Be mine the task to think; be still! At last,
When action doth demand united strength,
Then I will call thee up, and we as one

With all-surpassing might will boldly stride
To consummation.

Orestes. I hear Ulysses speak.

Pylad. Nay, mock me not.
Each one must choose his hero, after whom,
Upon the path to high Olympus, he
Must toiling go. Let this be granted me :
I hold that craft and cunning ne'er disgrace
The man whose life to valorous deeds are given.

Orestes. I value him who brave and upright is.

Pylad. Therefore I have not sought advice of thee.
One step is ta'en already. From our guards
I have till now much useful knowledge drawn.
I know, a foreign, godlike woman holds
That bloody law enchained ; a stainless heart
And incense, prayer, she offers to the gods.
Her virtue is world-famed ; 'tis thought she's sprung
From stock of Amazons, has fled her country
To avoid some great and threatening ill.

Orestes. It seems her spotless reign hath lost its power
Through near approach of guilty wretch, whose curse
Pursues and covers him like wide-spread night.
The pious thirst for blood will yet unloose
The ancient custom from its chains to slay us.
The savage-thoughted king marks us for death ;
A woman will not save us, when he's roused.

Pylad. 'Tis well for us that it a woman is ;
A man, be he the best, inures his mind
To cruelty and for himself at last
Doth make a law from that which he abhors,
Becomes by force of custom harsh and strange.
But woman, once possessed, will ever hold

To singleness of purpose fast. Thou canst
More safely count on her in good and ill.
Be still ! She comes ; leave us alone. Not now
Dare I reveal to her our names, nor trust
To her without reserve our destiny.
Go thou, and ere she speaks with thee, I'll meet thee.

SCENE II. IPHIGENIA. PYLADES.

Iph. Oh stranger, whence thou art and comest, speak !
Methinks that I should sooner liken thee
Unto a Grecian than a Scythian man.

(Removes his chains.)

There's peril in the freedom which I give ;
The gods avert the ill that threatens you !

Pylad. Oh sweet and gentle voice ! Thrice welcome sound
Of mother tongue in strange and foreign land !
Again my native haven's hills so blue
Before my eyes, a captive, I behold
And welcome them anew. Of this, thy joy,
Be well assured, that I too am a Greek !
Thy noble presence so entranced my soul
That I forgot how much I need thine aid.
Oh, say, unless some fate hath closed thy lips,
From which of all our tribes dost thou derive
Thy origin divine.

Iph. The priestess, by her goddess very self
Elected and made holy, speaks with thee.
Let that suffice thee ; say, then, who thou art,
And what unhappy overruling fate
Hath hither brought thee with thy comrade true.

Pylad. 'Tis easy to relate what grievous ill

Pursues us with oppressive fellowship.
 Oh, couldst thou, holy one, as easily
 Impart to us the joyous gleam of hope !
 From Crete are we, Adrastus' sons, well-born :
 I am the youngest of the house and known
 As Cephalus and he Laodamas
 The eldest. 'Twixt us stood another son,
 Uncouth and wild, who e'en in childhood's play
 All concord and enjoyment rent asunder.
 We passively obeyed our mother's words,
 The while our father's might waged war at Troy ;
 But when enriched with booty he returned
 And soon thereafter passed away, then strife
 For rule and heritage estranged the heirs.
 I joined the fortunes of the eldest one.
 He slew his brother. For the guilt of blood
 The furies drive him on from place to place.
 And yet the Delphian Apollo sends us
 To this inhospitable shore with hope.
 Here in the temple of his sister he
 Commanded us to wait for helping hand
 Beneficent. We are in chains and brought
 Before thee here for sacrifice. Thou knowest.
Iph. Fell Troy? Dear man, assure me.
Pylad. It lies. Oh, promise us deliverance !
 Oh, hasten thou the succour which a god
 Hath promised us ; and pity thou my brother.
 Speak soon to him some kind and cheering word ;
 Yet spare him, I beseech thee, when thou speakest :
 For 'tis his sad condition that his mind
 Through joy and pain and mem'ry's power is moved
 Most easily and in confusion thrown.

A paroxysm of madness seizes him
And his great soul, so beautiful and free,
Is given a prey to Furies' wrath and power.

Iph. Be thy misfortune e'er so great, yet I
Do charge thee to forget, till thou hast answered me.

Pylad. The lofty citadel which ten long years
Withstood the army of all Greece combined
Lies now in ruins ne'er again to rise.
Yet many a grave of our most valiant men
Doth draw our thoughts to that barbaric shore.
There lies Achilles with his noble friends.

Iph. Ye images of gods! Ye too are dust!

Pylad. And Palamedes, Ajax Telamon,—
They never saw the fatherland again.

Iph. He speaks not of my father, names him not
Among the slain. He lives! Still lives for me!
I shall behold his face. O hope, dear heart!

Pylad. Yet blessed are the thousands who have died
The death so bitter-sweet at hand of foe;
For an inimical and angry god
Prepared for the returning wanderers
Wild terrors on the main and mournful end
In triumph's stead. Doth sound of human voice
Ne'er come to thee? As far as it doth reach
It bears the rumor round of unheard deeds.
So then the lamentation which doth fill
Mycene's halls with e'er-recurring sighs
Is hid from thee? For with Ægisthus' aid,
Her spouse by Clytæmnestra was ensnared
And slain upon the day of his return!—
I see thou dost revere this royal house!
I see it, for thy bosom vainly strives

Against the unexpected, dreadful word.
Art thou a daughter of a friend? Wast thou
In this same city born a neighbor then?
Conceal it not and hold it not amiss
That I'm the first this horror to announce.

Iph. Say on, how was the heavy deed accomplished?

Pylad. When on the day of his return, the king
Descended from the bath, refreshed and calm,
And reached to take his garment from his spouse,
The wretched woman o'er his noble head
And shoulders threw a fabric woven with skill
With manifold and complicated plaits ;
And as he vainly strove to free himself,
As from a net, Ægisthus, traitor, struck ;—
Down sank this mighty prince thus veiled to death.

Iph. And what was the conspirator's reward?

Pylad. A bed and rule, which he already had.

Iph. Did thus their evil lust lead on to crime?

Pylad. And deep desire for vengeance long concealed.

Iph. How had the king offended her so sore?

Pylad. By an atrocious deed, which, be the act
Of murder ever just, was her excuse.
To Aulis he allured her and, the while
A deity with boisterous winds opposed
The passage of the Greeks, had thither brought
Before the altar of Diana chaste
The eldest daughter, Iphigenia ;
And there she fell, a bloody sacrifice
To save the Greeks. 'Twas this, they say, that

stamped

Upon her heart a hate so deep that she
Submitted to Ægisthus' fond caress

And flung, with her own hands, the fatal net
Around her spouse.

Iph. (*Veiling herself.*)

It is enough. Thou shalt see me again.

Pylad. (*Alone.*)

By fortunes of the royal house she seems
Profoundly moved. Whate'er her name and race,
She has, herself, most surely known the king
And, fortunate for us, from noble house
Was hither brought a slave. Be still, fond heart,
And let us wisely steer our course with joy
And courage towards the glimmering star of hope.

ACT III.

SCENE I. IPHIGENIA. ORESTES.

Iph. Unhappy man, thy fetters I unloose
But as a sign of a more painful fate.
The freedom, which the sanctuary grants,
Forebodeth death, e'en as life's last clear glance
Of the frail invalid. Yet I can not
And dare not say unto myself that ye
Are lost! How could I with a murd'rous hand
Devote you unto death? And none soe'er,
As long as I am priestess to Diana,
Dares touch your head. But now when I refuse
The office, as the incensed king demands it,
He will select one of my maidens here
As my successor, and I then can naught
But aid you with my ardent wish alone.

Oh, worthy countryman ! The least of all
Of those who served at the ancestral hearth
Is doubly welcome in a foreign land ;
How shall I with due joy and reverence
Receive you, ye who bring before my sight
The image of the heroes whom I learned
From elders to revere,—who fondly cheer
My inmost heart with new and pleasing hope !

Orestes. Concealest thou thy name and origin
With wise forethought? or may I know, who stands
Before me like a heaven-descended one?

Iph. Hereafter thou shalt know. But tell me now,
Since I but partly learned it from thy brother,
What was the end of those, who came from Troy
To find, upon the threshold of their homes,
Dumbstruck, a cruel unexpected fate.
Sure I was young when guided to this strand ;
Yet well do I recall the timid glance,
Which I with wonder and with fearfulness
Upon those heroes cast. They went forth so,
As though Olympus opened wide her gates,
And antique forms illustrious came forth
To threaten Ilion's fall, and high o'er all
The towering form of Agamemnon stood !
Oh, tell me, pray : he fell, in his own house,
Through his own consort's and Ægisthus' trick?

Orestes. Thou say'st !

Iph. Alas ! Mycene, woe is thee !
Thus have the sons of Tantalus sown curse
On curse, broad-cast, with full and reckless hand,
And shaking, like the weeds, their desert heads
And strewing seeds by thousands o'er the waste,

Begotten murderers all near of kin
In an unbroken line from son to son
In ever changing fury ! But reveal
What of thy brother's speech so suddenly
The darkness of my fright concealed from me,
How has the last of this illustrious race,
The darling child, ordained some day to be
His sire's avenger, how has he, Orestes,
Escaped the day of blood? Has a like fate
Entangled him in the Avernus net?
Is he still safe? Alive? And lives Electra?

Orestes. They live.

Iph. Thou golden sun, lend me thy brightest rays,
Lay them for thanks before the throne of Jove !
For I am poor and dumb.

Orestes. Art thou a friend unto this royal house,
Art thou with closer ties unto it bound,
As thy sweet joy seems to disclose to me ;
Then tame thy heart awhile and hold it fast !
For to the joyful mind a swift relapse
Into the state of pain is hard to bear.
Thou knowest only Agamemnon's death.

Iph. And know I not enough with this?

Orestes. Thou hast but half of horror's tale perceived.

Iph. What else is there to fear? Orestes lives,
Electra lives.

Orestes. And fearest thou for Clytæmnestra naught?

Iph. Nor hope, nor fear, can save her evermore.

Orestes. She too departed from the land of hope.

Iph. Shed she her blood in her remorseful rage?

Orestes. Not so, yet her own blood gave her to death.

Iph. More clearly speak, that I no longer doubt.

For dark uncertainty in thousand forms
Beats round my tim'rous head its sombre wings.
Orestes. Have then the gods thus chosen me t' announce
A deed, which I so willingly would hide
In soundless hollow caverns of night's realm?
Against my will thy gentle tongue constrains me ;
Perhaps it asks and will receive a pang.
Upon the day in which the father fell,
Electra, quick to save, concealed her brother ;
His uncle Strophius received him gladly,
Reared him beside his son, named Pylades,
Who round the adopted one the tenderest ties
Of friendship bound. And as they grew, there grew
Within their souls the burning wish to avenge
The king's death. Unexpected, in disguise,
They reach Mycene, feigning so to bear
The mournful tidings of Orestes' death,
Together with his ashes. And the queen
Receives them well ; they pass into the house.
Unto Electra then Orestes makes
Himself full known ; in him she fans the fire
Of vengeance, which the mother's sacred presence
Had well repressed. She leads him silently
Unto the place whereon his father fell,
Where still remained an old slight trace of blood,
So rashly spilt, and stained the oft-washed floor
With pale portentous streaks. With fiery tongue
Each circumstance of the accursed deed
She there portrayed, and her own wretched life
Harassed and menial, the arrogance
Of the successful traitor and the perils
Which now the children feared from cruelty

Of one who had become step-mother harsh :
Here then the ancient dagger which so oft
Had made such fearful havoc in the house
Of Tantalus, she forced upon her brother,
And Clytæmnestra fell by her son's hand.

Iph.

Immortal gods, ye who in spotless light
On clouds forever new, so happy dwell,
Have ye for this alone so many years
Thus sundered me from human kind, kept me
So near yourselves, charged me with filial care
To feed the holy fire's glow, raised up
My soul like flame unto your dwelling-place
In everlasting pious purity,
But later and more deeply to transfix me
With horrors of my house?—But let me hear
Of the unhappy one, Orestes ! Speak
To me of him !

Orestes.

Oh, would that we could speak of him as dead !
How like the foam the mother's spirit rose
From out the blood of her slain self and called
Unto the ancient daughters of the night :
“ Let not the matricide escape ! Pursue
The criminal ! To you he's given for doom ! ”
They hear, and all around, their hollow eyes
Glare like the eagle's, eager for the prey.
They stir themselves within their gloomy cells,
From nook and cranny steal abroad with stealth
Their constant followers, Despair and Grief.
From them a fume of Acheron ascends ;
Within the circle of its vapor rolls
Confusing round the guilty wretch's head
The never-ceasing sight of what is done.

So they, with power to ruin clothed, thus tread
The beauteous ground of earth divinely sown,
From which an ancient curse long banished them.
Swift-footed they pursue the fugitive :
They give him rest, only to fright anew.

Iph. Unhappy man, thou art in a like case
And feel'st the pangs of the poor fugitive !

Orestes. What sayest thou ? What, thinkest a like case ?

Iph. Like him, a fratricide oppresses thee ;
This much already hath thy younger brother
Confided unto me.

Orestes. I can not bear the thought that thou, great soul,
Shouldst ever be deceived by falsehood's wile.
A clever stranger, practised in deceit
Ties round a stranger's feet a web of lies
To catch him in a snare ; 'twixt us be truth !
I am Orestes, and this guilty head
Sinks down unto the grave and seeketh death ;
In any form he's welcome when he comes !
Whoe'er thou art, I wish deliverance
For thee and for my friends ; not for myself.
Thou seemest here against thy will to stay ;
Devise some means of flight and leave me here.
From rocky cliff let my dead body fall,
Down to the watery main let fume my blood
And bring a curse to this barbaric shore !
Go ye, at home in beauteous land of Greece
There to begin a new and blessed life. (*Withdraws.*)

Iph. So then at last, Fulfilment, fairest daughter
Of the almighty father, thou descend'st
To me ! How vast thine image stands before me !
My glance can scarce attain unto the hands,

Which, flowing o'er with fruit and crowns of blessing,
The treasures of Olympus bringeth down.
As we by his abounding gifts may know
The king—for what to thousands seemeth wealth,
To him is but a trifle—so may we
Know you, ye gods, by gifts withheld for long
And wisely suited to our several needs.
For ye alone can know what profits us,
And see the future's kingdom stretched afar,
When every night a veil of star and mist
Obscures the view for us. Ye calmly hear
Our earnest prayers, when we like children beg
For quick response ; but never do your hands
Untimely pluck the golden fruits of heaven ;
And woe to him who, snatching them with greed
And insolence, consumes unto his death
The acrid food. Oh, let the long awaited,
Still scare imagined happiness, not pass
From me like empty shadow of a friend
Departed, and in pangs by far more piercing !

Orestes. (*Returning.*)

Invokest thou the gods for thine own self
And Pylades, then couple not my name
With yours. Thou canst not save the criminal,
To whom thou join'st thyself, and shar'st his curse
And fate.

Iph. My fate is firmly bound to thine.

Orestes. By no means !

Let me descend alone, companionless,
Unto the dead. Couldst thou the guilty one
Conceal within the folds of thine own veil,
Thou couldst not hide him from the tireless eye

Of those who ever watch ; thy presence e'en,
Thou heavenly one, would only press aside,
Not frighten them away. They dare not tread,
With bold aspiring feet, this hallowed ground ;
Yet in the distance here and there I hear
Their fiendish laughter. So wolves wait round
The tree whereon a traveler saves himself.
Out there they lie in wait ; if I forsake
This fane, then they will rise, and, shaking high
The serpent-heads and scattering dust around
From every side, drive on their prey before them.

Iph. Canst thou, Orestes, take a kindly word ?

Orestes. Spare it for one who is a friend of gods.

Iph. They grant to thee the light of a new hope.

Orestes. Through smoke and fume I see the feeble glimmer
Of death's flood light me on the way to hell.

Iph. Hast thou one sister only, named Electra ?

Orestes. The one I knew ; yet well the elder took
Her goodly lot, which seemed to us so dreadful,
Out of the misery of our house betimes.
Oh, cease thy questionings, lest thou too join
Th' Erinnys' company ; with hate malign
They blow the ashes from my soul away
And suffer not the dying ember's fire
Of our ruined race t' expire in me.

Shall then the glow, ignited by design,
And fed by sulphurous fumes from hell beneath,
Forever on my soul tormenting burn ?

Iph. I bring sweet incense now into the flame.

Oh, let the pure and holy breath of love
In gentle zephyrs cool thy bosom's glow.
Orestes, dear, canst thou not understand ?

Hath thus the company of terror's gods
Dried up thy blood within thy arteries?
Creeps thus, as from the hideous Gorgon head,
A petrifying sorcery through thy limbs?
Oh, if the voice of mother's blood bespilt
Can call in hollow tones to hell's confines,
Shall not the guileless sister's blessed word
Propitious gods down from Olympus call?

Orestes. It calls! it calls! Wilt thou thus ruin me?
Doth an avenging goddess hide in thee?
Who art thou then, whose voice with terror moves
My inmost soul to its profoundest depths?

Iph. In thy heart's depths the truth proclaims itself.
Orestes, I am she! See Iphigenia!
I live!

Orestes. Thou!

Iph. My brother!

Orestes. Leave me! Away!

I counsel thee, touch not these locks of mine!
A fire unquenchable flames forth from me
As from the bridal robe of Glauce flamed.
Leave me! Like Hercules will I, base wretch,
Absorbed in self, go down to death and shame.

Iph. Thou shalt not perish! Oh, that I could draw
One peaceful word from thee! Resolve my doubt,
Let now the happiness so long implored
Become assured to me. A whirl of joy
And pain goes through my soul. A shuddering chill
Removes me from the stranger, but my heart,
With yearnings deep and strong, moves to my brother.

Orestes. Is this Lyæus' temple? And raves wild
The priestess in a holy frenzy forth?

Iph. Oh, hear me ! Look upon me, how my heart,
So long repressed, now opens to the bliss
The world still holds for me, the dearest head
To kiss, to clasp thee in mine arms, which erst
The empty winds embraced. Oh, let me ! Let me !
For from Parnassus not more brightly springs
The ceaseless fountain's flow in sparkling spray
From rock to rock down to the golden vale,
Than flows the joy that gushes from my heart
And like a happy sea embraces me.
Orest' ! Orest' ! My brother !

Orestes. Lovely nymph,
I trust thee and thy fond caresses not.
Diana rules her ministers austere
And will avenge her temple's profanation.
Remove thine arm from off my breast !
And if thine ardor seeks to save a youth
And thou wilt kindly tender him the boon,
Then turn thy thoughts unto my worthy friend.
On yonder rocky path he strays about ;
Seek him, show him the way aright, and spare me.

Iph. Be calm, my brother, and receive the found one !
Brand not a sister's pure and heavenly joy
With infamy of rash and guilty lust.
Oh, take the blindness from his staring eyes !
Let not the instant of our highest joy
Be turned to three-fold anguish ! She is here,
The long-lost sister. From the altar me
The goddess tore away and hither brought
Me safe into her own true sanctuary.
Thou art a captive, held for sacrifice,
And in the priestess findest thine own sister.

Orestes. Unhappy one ! Then let the sun behold
The closing horror of our ill-starred house !
Is not Electra here ? that she too may
With us go down to death, and not prolong
Her life for a more direful fate and grief.
'Tis well ! I follow to the altar, priestess ;
For fratricide is custom handed down
Of old in Pelops' race ; I thank you, gods,
That ye have purposed to uproot me childless.
And let me counsel thee, be not too much
In love with the bright sun and with the stars ;
Come, follow me into the gloomy realm !
As dragons from the sulphurous pool begotten
And warring with the kindred brood, devour
Each other, so the fury-bearing race
Destroys itself ; childless and guiltless, come,
Descend with me ! Dost look with pitying eyes
On me ? Forbear ! With such a pitying glance
Did Clytæmnestra seek to find a way
To her son's heart ; yet his uplifted arm
Smote her fair breast. The mother fell !—Arise,
Thou angry ghost ! Come on, ye Furies, come
And circling round, act well your several parts
In this most welcome spectacle, the last,
Most horrible of all, that ye've prepared !
Not hate and not revenge your dagger sharpen ;
The lovely sister will perform the deed
Perforce. Weep not ! Thou hast no touch of blame.
E'er since my earliest years naught have I loved
As I could love thee, sister. Brandish now
Your steel, spare not, tear through this naked breast
And open for the seething streams a way.

(He sinks exhausted.)

Iph. I can not bear this fortune and distress
Alone. Where art thou, Pylades? Dear man,
Where shall I find thine aid?
(*She withdraws, seeking Pylades.*)

SCENE II.

Orestes. (*Awaking from his stupor and rising.*)

Another! Reach to me from Lethe's flood
The last cool quickening draught! Soon from my
breast
The spasm of life will be expelled; my spirit,
Delivered to oblivion's source, will soon
Flow on in quietude to you, ye shades,
In everlasting mist. In your repose
The harried son of earth finds glad relief.—
What lisplings do I hear among the branches,
What rustling noise from yonder twilight dim?
They come now to behold their latest guest!
What troop is it that joys so gloriously
Among themselves like royal company?
They go in peace, both old and young, the men
With women, and their forms advancing seem
Like gods. In truth, they are my ancestors!
Thyestes goes with Atreus, engaged
In confidential talk; the children glide
In play about them. Is there then no more
Of ancient enmity among you here?
Expired revenge as dies the light of day?
Then I too shall be welcome, and I may
Commingle in your festive company.

Ye fathers, welcome ! Greetings from Orestes,
The last man of your ancient royal race ;
What ye have sown, is harvested by him :
With curses laden I am come to you.
Each burden here more easily is borne :
Take him, oh, take him to your fellowship !
Thee Atreus, I revere, thee too, Thyestes ;
Here are we all from enmity set free.
Show me my father, whom in life I saw
But once !—And art thou he, my father, thou ?
And trustest thou to lead the mother round ?
Dare Clytæmnestra offer thee her hand
So dares Orestes turn his steps to her
And say to her : Behold thy son, Orestes !—
Behold your son ! Bid him be welcome here.
On earth was murder's greeting in our house
A never-failing signal, and the race
Of ancient Tantalus must find its joy
Beyond the realm of night. Ye cry : 'Thou'rt welcome !
And ye receive me. Oh, lead me to him,
Our ancient ancestor ! Oh, where is he ?
That I may see him and the dear old head
That honored, with the gods in council sat.
You seem to hesitate, to turn away ?
What meaneth this ? Is he, the godlike one,
In torments ? Woe is me ! 'Th' almighty gods
Have forged and fastened to the hero's breast
An adamantine chain of cruel pains.

SCENE III. ORESTES. IPHIGENIA. PYLADES

Orestes. Are ye too now descended from above?

'Tis well, my sister! Yet Electra stays:
 May some good god soon send the last one down,
 On gentle rays like arrows swift to us.
 Thee, my poor friend, must I commiserate!
 Come with me, come, away to Pluto's throne,
 As guests but newly come to greet the host!

Iph. Ye twain, who on the wide expanse of heaven
 The beauteous light by day and night upheave
 For men and shine not for departed souls,
 Preserve us twain! Thy radiant brother, thou,
 Diana, lov'st before all else on earth
 And in the heavens, and turn'st thy virgin face
 With longing calm to his eternal light.
 Oh, let my only brother, found so late,
 Not rave and wander in the gloom of madness!
 And if thy purpose now is done, for which
 Thou hast concealed me here, if thou through him
 Wilt grant me saving help, and him through me,
 Then free him from the chains of that old curse,
 That precious time for freedom be not lost.

Pylad. Dost thou know us and this most sacred grove
 And this same light, which shines not for the dead?
 Feel'st thou the arm of friend and of the sister,
 Who still do hold thee fast,—still hold the living?
 Take hold of us; we are not empty shadows.
 Hear thou my voice! Attend! And nerve thyself!
 Each moment now is dear, and our return
 Depends on slender threads, which now, it seems,
 Some favoring Parce spins.

Orestes. (To *Iphigenia.*)

Now let me first with spirit disenthralled
In thy embrace unsullied joy obtain !
Ye gods, who move with flaming might to cleave
Thick clouds and, earnest to bestow your gifts,
With voice of thunder and with roar of winds
Pour o'er the parched earth in raging streams
The long awaited rain ; yet soon dissolve
Th' expectant fears of men in happiness
And turn their terror-stricken gaze to joy
And loudest praise, when in the pendent drops
From freshened leaves the re-appearing sun
Reflects his image in a thousand forms
And Iris banded bright with airy hand
Rifts the gray gauze of the departing cloud :
Oh, let me then in my dear sister's arms,
On my companion's breast, enjoy and keep
With thankfulness, what ye have granted me !
The curse is loosed, I feel it in my heart.
I hear them going, the Eumenides,
To Tartarus ; they slam the brazen gates
Behind them with a thundering noise from far.
The earth exhales revivifying odors
And calls me back again on her wide plains
To range for life's delights and deeds of might.

Pylad. Then squander not the time allotted us !
The wind, which swells our sails, let it first bear
Our perfect joy to high Olympus. Come !
Our counsel and decision must be swift.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. IPHIGENIA.

Iph. When the heavenly powers
Perplexities destine
For a son born of earth
And prepare they for him
Soul-quaking transition
From life's pleasures to pains
And from pains unto pleasures ;
Then they train him up so
In the city's gay throngs
Or on far distant shores
That in hour of trial
Needful help he may find
In a true tranquil friend.
Oh, bless, ye gods, our faithful Pylades
And whatso'er he undertakes to do !
He is the arm of youth in battle's strife,
The kindling eye of age in council halls :
For his great soul is calm ; it well preserves
The holy inexhausted boon of peace,
And from its depths draws for the fugitive
Advice and aid. Me from my brother he
Hath torn away, on whom I gazed again
And yet again amazed, and could not make
The joy my own, and would not let him go,
Unmindful of the danger threatening near.
They go now, their design to execute,
Down to the sea, where, in the bay concealed,
The ship with their companions waits the sign ;
With words sagacious they have filled my mouth

And taught me what to say unto the king
 If he should send and urgently demand
 Of me the sacrifice. Ah! well I see
 That like a child I must be lead perforce.
 I have not learned deception's artifice
 Nor ever played a trick on any one.
 Oh, woe to falsehood! It frees not the breast
 Like every other word pronounced in truth;
 Begets in us distrust and bringeth anguish
 On him who secretly contriveth it;
 And it returns, a liberated dart,
 Turned in its flight by some divinity,
 And strikes the archer. Care on care distracts
 My breast. Perhaps upon th' unhallowed shore
 Again the fury's rage will seize the brother
 And bind him to the earth in agony?
 Perhaps they will be seen? Methinks I hear
 Armed men approaching!—Here!—The messenger
 Himself with rapid strides comes from the king.
 My heart beats fast, my soul grows dark and sad,
 As I behold the visage of the man
 Whom I must now oppose with falsehood's wiles.

SCENE II. IPHIGENIA. ARKAS.

- Arkas.* Haste, priestess, now prepare the sacrifice!
 The king attends, the people stand and wait.
Iph. I would fulfil my office and thy will
 Had not an unexpected hindrance come
 'Twixt me and the performance of my duty.
Arkas. What is it that impedes the king's command?
Iph. A circumstance, which we can not control.

- Arkas.* Declare it, that I may apprise him soon ;
For he determined on the death of both.
- Iph.* The gods have not yet so determined it.
The elder of these men bears guilty stain
Of his near kindred's blood, which he hath shed.
The Furies follow him upon his tracks,
Yea, in the inner temple e'en he fell
A prey to madness, and his presence here
Profaned the holy place. Now with my maidens
I hasten to the water's marge to bathe
The sacred image in the cleansing waves,
So to perform a consecrating act
In rites mysterious. Let none disturb
Our peaceful progress to the sea.
- Arkas.* I will with speed announce this hind'rance strange
Unto the king. Before thou hast consent
From him, begin not thou this holy work.
- Iph.* This is the priestess' right and trust alone.
- Arkas.* A case so strange the king should surely know.
- Iph.* His counsel or command can alter naught.
- Arkas.* The ruler oft is asked for appearance sake.
- Iph.* Urge not upon me what I should refuse.
- Arkas.* Refuse not that which good and needful is.
- Iph.* I will comply, if thou wilt not delay.
- Arkas.* Soon with the tidings will I be in camp
And soon be here again with his command.
Oh, could I bear to him one message more,
To clear up all that now perplexes us ;
For thou hast not esteemed thy friend's advice.
- Iph.* What I had power to do, I've gladly done.
- Arkas.* E'en yet there's time for thee to change thy mind.
- Iph.* No longer now is that within our power.

Arkas. Thou hold'st impossible what costs thee pain.

Iph. To thee 'tis easy, for the wish deludes thee.

Arkas. Wilt thou then hazard all so passively?

Iph. Into the hands of gods I've placed my trust.

Arkas. They use mankind to save by human means.

Iph. Upon their lightest beck it all depends.

Arkas. I tell thee it doth lie in thine own hand.

The king's exasperated mind alone

Prescribes for these two strangers bitter death.

Long since the people's thought hath weaned itself

From cruel sacrifice and bloody service.

Yea, many a one whom adverse fate hath borne

To foreign strands, hath for himself perceived,

How like a god the friendly face of man

Hath met the hapless wanderer, whose bark

Storm-driven, drifted on the stranger's shores.

Oh, turn not from us what thou canst avail!

Thou endest lightly what thou hast begun:

For nowhere mildness, which descends from heaven

In human form, more quickly for itself

Uprears a kingdom, than where dark and wild

A new-born folk, replete with courage, life

And might, left to itself and fear's forebodings,

The heavy burden bears of human life.

Iph. Shake not my soul with pleadings vain, for thou

Canst never make me yield to thy demands.

Arkas. As long as there is time, nor pains we spare

Nor repetition of a kindly word.

Iph. Thyself thy troublest, and excitest pains

In me; in vain are both; therefore now leave me.

Arkas. The pains it is which I now call to aid:

For they are friends, and monitors of good.

Iph. They sieze and hold my soul in piercing throes
Yet will they never conquer my dislike.

Arkas. Can then a soul so beautiful thus feel
Dislike for kindness proffered by a king?

Iph. Yes, when the king, ignoring what is fit,
Would sue for me instead of gratitude.

Arkas. Who feels no inclination never fails
To find an argument to excuse himself.
I will inform the prince what's happened here.
Oh, would thou couldst to thy remembrance call,
How nobly he hath borne himself to thee
From thy first coming to this present day !

SCENE III. IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

Iph. Now all at once and most unseason'bly
I feel my heart within my bosom turned.
I tremble !—as with currents swift the flood
In swelling billows overflows the rocks
Which lie upon the sands down by the sea,
So flowed a stream of joy o'er all my sense.
I held within my arms ecstatic bliss
Unspeakable. Again a cloud appeared
To softly steal around me, raise me up
Above the earth and lull me in such slumber
As erst the goddess laid around my temples
When she stretched forth her saving arm. My heart
With impulse strange and strong yearned for my
brother ;
I listened only to his friend's advice ;
Only to save them, pressed my spirit on.
And as the sailor gladly turns his back

Upon the cliffs of some deserted isle,
So Tauris lay behind me. Now the voice
Of this trustworthy man has called me back,
Reminded me that here too I forsake
Mankind. Twice hateful now is this deceit.
Be still, my soul, be still ! Begin, st thou now
To waver and to doubt ? Must thou forsake
The firm abode of thy dear solitude ?
Thee, once again embarked, the rocking waves
Will seize and hold,—dejected and alarmed
Thou understandest not the world and thee.

SCENE IV. IPHIGENIA. PYLADES.

Pylad. Where is she ? That I quickly may to her
The joyful news of our deliverance bear !

Iph. Thou seest me anxious and awaiting here
The sure relief which thou hast promised me.

Pylad. Thy brother is restored ! In glad discourse
We trod the rocky bottom and the sand
Of the unhallowed shore ; behind us lay
The grove,—we marked it not. And gloriously
And with an ever growing glory blazed
The beauteous flame of youth around his head
All-curl'd ; the glow of courage and of hope
Filled his clear eye ; his liberated heart
Quite yielded to the joy, quite to the wish,
Thee, his deliverer, and me to save.

Iph. May you be blest, and never from thy lips,
Which have so kindly spoken, may the sound
Of sorrow or complaint assail our ears !

Pylad. I bring still more than this ; for well attended,

E'en like a prince, doth Fortune seem t' approach.
For our companions too have all been found.
Within a bay among the rocks they hid
The ship and waiting sat disconsolate.
They saw thy brother and at once arose
With shouts of joy, and pressing round prayed him
To hasten on the hour of the departure.
Each hand was eager then to grasp the oar,
E'en then a wind in whispers raised on shore
A favoring breeze, by all alike remarked.
Then let us hasten,—to the temple lead me,
And led me tread the inmost sanctuary,
The goal of our desires in reverence seize !
I can alone suffice to bear away
The sacred image on my shoulders strong ;
Oh how I long to reach the wished-for burden !

*(With these words he goes towards the temple
without observing that Iphigenia does not
follow ; at last he turns about.)*

You stand and loiter—speak to me—thou'rt silent !
You seem confused ! Doth some new ill arise
To check our fortune? Speak ! Hast thou informed
The king, as we in concert wisely planned ?
Iph. I have, dear man ; yet thou wilt chide I know.
Thine aspect was to me a mute reproof !
The royal messenger approached, and I
Each word repeated as thou gavest me.
He seemed astonished, urgently desired,
To first announce the festival so strange
Unto the king, that he might learn his pleasure ;
And now I wait for his return.

Pylad. Woe and alas ! Now danger hangs anew
Above our heads ! Why didst thou not conceal
Thyself with cunning 'neath thy priesthood's right ?

Iph. I ne'er have used it for concealment's veil.

Pylad. So thou, pure soul, will bring thyself and us
To grief. Why did I not anticipate
This same contingency and teach thee how
To parry such demands !

Iph. Chide me alone,
The fault is mine, I feel that it is so ;
Yet otherwise I could not meet the man
Who sought from me with reason and with zeal
What in my heart I knew was just and right.

Pylad. The cloud of danger grows more dense ; yet so
Let us not tremble or with heedless haste
Betray ourselves. Await thou quietly
The messenger's return and then stand fast,
Let come what may : for such a festival
Of consecration to direct, pertains
Unto the priestess, not unto the king.
And should he ask to see the foreigner,
He who the heavy load of madness bears,
Decline it so, as though thou hadst us both
Within the temple guarded well. So thou
Wilt give us time in greatest haste to flee,
While we purloin the sacred treasure hence,
Unworthily held by this rude barb'rous folk.
Apollo sends us most propitious signs ;
Before we piously fulfil the terms,
Divinely he his promises fulfils.
Orestes now is free, is whole !—With him
Thus freed, oh, bear us, favoring winds, across

To rocky isle, the god's own dwelling-place ;
Then to Mycene, to renew its life,
That from the ashes of its smouldered hearth
The household gods may joyously arise,
And cheerful fire light their dwellings 'round.
Thy hand shall first for them sweet incense strew
From golden censers. Over that threshold
Thou wilt again bring health and life, appease
The curse and gloriously adorn thine own
With life's fresh blooms anew.

Iph. If I, dear friend, perceive thy meaning right,
Then, as the flower turns to greet the sun,
So turns the soul, pierced by thy radiant words,
To the sweet comfort which thou dost assure.
How precious is the confident discourse
Of present friends ; to him who dwells alone
Its power divine is lost and silent falls.
For, locked within the breast, in him doth thought
And resolution ripen slow ; the presence
Of loving friend unfolds them readily.

Pylad. Farewell ! I now will hasten to console
Our friends, who eagerly in waiting stay.
Then quickly I'll return and lie in wait
Concealed among the rocks and thicket here,
Upon a sign from you—What thinkest thou ?
For all at once a cloud of sadness spreads
In silence o'er thy fair and open brow.

Iph. Forgive me ! Like thin clouds before the sun,
So trifling cares and fears sweep o'er my soul.

Pylad. Fear not !
Delusively hath fear with danger joined
A compact close ; companions are they both.

- Iph.* It is a noble care and charge which warn me
Not to deceive in malice or to rob
The king, who has become my second father.
- Pylad.* Thou fleest from him who would thy brother slay.
- Iph.* Yet he it is who hath befriended me.
- Pylad.* What needful is, is not ingratitude.
- Iph.* It still remains ingratitude, but need
Excuseth it.
- Pylad.* 'Fore gods and men 'twill free thee from all blame.
- Iph.* But my own heart within is not at peace.
- Pylad.* 'Tis hidden pride, to be too nice in right.
- Iph.* I question not the right, I only feel.
- Pylad.* Feel'st thou aright, then thou must honored be.
- Iph.* The heart is only happy when 'tis pure.
- Pylad.* So hast thou kept thyself within the temple ;
Our life doth teach us to be less severe
With others and ourselves ; thou too wilt learn it.
So wondrously is formed the race of man,
So variously entangled and involved,
That no one in himself, nor with his kind
Can keep himself unsullied, unperplexed.
Nor are we called upon to judge ourselves.
To walk and to take heed unto his way,
Is each man's duty and his first concern ;
For seldom he esteems aright what's done,
And what he does, he knows not how t' esteem.
- Iph.* Almost thou dost persuade me to thy way.
- Pylad.* Needs there persuasion where the choice's denied ?
There is one only way to save thy brother,
Thyself and friend ; can we decline to go ?
- Iph.* Oh, grant me some delay ! for thou thyself
Would'st not permit such wrong to fall on one

- To whom for favors thou wert held in bond.
- Pylad.* If we should fall, there would remain for thee
 Reproach more bitter, gendering despair.
 'Tis clear that thou art not inured to loss,
 Since thou, in order to escape great ill,
 Art not e'en willing t' offer one false word.
- Iph.* Oh, would I bore a manlike heart in me,
 Which, when it entertains a purpose bold,
 Doth close itself to every other voice !
- Pylad.* In vain thou dost refuse ; the iron hand
 Of hard necessity commands ; her nod
 Severe is law supreme ; to it the gods
 Themselves must yield obedience. Silent reigns
 Th' uncounseled sister of eternal fate.
 What she imposes, bear ; do, what she bids.
 The rest thou knowest. Soon will I return,
 Then to receive from out thy hallowed hand
 The beauteous seal of our deliverance.

SCENE V. IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

- Iph.* I must obey him ; for I see mine own
 In urgent danger. Yet, ah me ! my fate
 Oppresses me with e'er increasing fears.
 Oh, shall I not preserve the peaceful hope,
 Which in my solitude I nourished fair ?
 Shall then this curse forever hover o'er us ?
 Shall the Tantalian race with blessings new
 Ne'er rise again ? All else doth fade and wane !
 The highest bliss, the fairest strength of life,
 Grows faint at last ! Wherefore then not the curse ?
 So then I hoped in vain, safe-guarded here,

Secluded from my people's destiny,
Some day with a clean hand and a clean heart
To purify the much polluted dwelling.
Scarce is my brother in my arms restored,
In manner strange and quick, from grievous ill,
Scarce comes the long-entreated ship near shore,
To bear me to my native haven hence,
That deaf necessity with heavy hand
Doth burden me with two-fold vice ; to take
By force the sacred image, honored much,
To me entrusted, and to circumvent
The man to whom I owe my life and fate.
Oh, that aversion may not sprout at last
Within my breast ! That not Titanic hate
Of ancient gods, deep-set and strong 'gainst you,
Olympians, may seize my tender breast
With vultures' claws ! Save me ! Thine image save
Within my soul !
Again within my ears the old song sounds,—
I had forgotten it,—forgot it gladly—
The Parcæ's song, which they in horror sang,
When Tantalus from golden seat fell down ;
They suffered with their aged friend ; their breasts
Were torn with rage and frightful was their song.
In childhood days the nurse sang it to me
And to the rest, I marked it well.

Let the fear of the gods
Be on children of men !
They hold in their hands
Eternal dominion

And can use it to smite
Whenever they please.

Let him fear them doubly,
Whom once they have honored !
On cliffs and on cloud-banks,
The seats are prepared
'Round tables of gold.

When discord arises
The guests are hurled headlong,
Disgraced and defamed,
To the depths of night's realm,
And wait in despair there,
In darkness confined,
For justice and right.

But the gods remain feasting
In festivals ever
At tables of gold.
They stride across mountains
To mountains again ;
From abysses beneath them
The breath of the Titans,
All strangling and struggling,
Ascendeth in fumes,
Like scent of burnt-off rings,
A light airy cloud.

The rulers turn from them
Their favoring eyes,—
From the whole hated race,
And shun in the children

Once loved and once honored
The features betraying
Their ancestor's line.

Thus sang they, the Parcæ ;
The banished one hearkens
In the caverns of night
To their song ; as he hears
He thinks of the fathers
Then thinks of the children
And shaketh his head.

ACT V.

SCENE I. THOAS. ARKAS.

Arkas. Perplexed I must admit that I know not,
To what point to direct suspicion's aim.
Is it the captives, who now meditate
Clandestine flight? Is it the priestess' self
Who aids them? For the rumor spreads and grows,
That still somewhere within the bay the ship,
Which these two hither brought, lies well concealed.
The man's insanity, this consecration,
The sacred pretext for delay, arouse
Suspicion only and demand precaution.

Thoas. First let the priestess hither quickly come !
Then search the shore with quick and eager haste,
E'en from the headland to the sanctuary.

Avoid its sacred depths, in ambush lie
All-watchful and upon them fall with might ;
Where'er you find them, seize them, as you may.

SCENE II. THOAS (*alone*).

Thoas. Now rage within my breast alternate sways ;
Against her first, whom I so holy thought,
Then 'gainst myself, who formed and fashioned her
Through fond indulgence for this treachery.
Man soon becomes inured to slavery
And lightly learns t' obey, when fully robbed
Of freedom. Yes, had she in the rude hands
Of my forefathers fallen and been spared
Their holy rage, glad would she then have been
To have escaped alive, and to have learned
To know her state with thankfulness and shed
The stranger's blood before the sacred altar,—
To make a duty of necessity.
Now in her breast my kindness doth inflame
Desire audacious. I in vain have hoped
To bind her to myself ; she seeketh now
Her fortune for herself alone. My heart
She won through flattery ; now I oppose :
Thus seeks she for herself a way through cunning
And through deceit, and all my kindness seems
To her an old worn-out estate.

SCENE III. IPHIGENIA. THOAS.

Iph. Dost summon me? What brings you here to us?

Thoas. Thou dost delay the sacrifice ; why so?

Iph. I have explained it all to Arkas clearly.

Thoas. I wish to learn it further from yourself.

Iph. The goddess gives you respite for reflection.

Thoas. To thee this respite seems quite opportune.

Iph. If now thy heart is hardened to resolve
On cruelty, thou shouldst not here appear !
A king, who's bent on inhumanity
Can servants find in plenty, who for grace
And hire will eagerly partake the half
Of the accursed deed ; yet royalty
Remains unstained. In secrecy profound
He meditates on death ; his messengers
Bring down upon the wretched victim's head
A flaming ruin, yet he soars in calm,
In his serenest height above the storm,
An unapproach-ed god.

Thoas. The holy lips sound forth a frantic song.

Iph. Not priestess now, but Agamemnon's daughter.
Reveredst thou the word of one unknown,
And wilt thou rashly bid the princess? No !
From youth till now have I learned to obey,
My parents first and then my deity,
And ever have I felt my soul most free
In sweet obedience ; but to yield myself
To the despotic will and harsh command
Of any man, I learned not there, nor here.

Thoas. An ancient law, not I, commandeth thee.

Iph. With eagerness we seize upon a law
That to our passions gives encouragement.
Another speaks to me, an older law,
Which I oppose to thee, the great command
Which holds each stranger sacred.

Thoas. The captives seem quite near and dear to thee :

Through sympathetic feeling and emotion
Thou hast forgotten wisdom's first command,
That we should not provoke the ruling powers.

Iph.

Speak I or am I silent, thou canst know
What is and ever dwells within my heart.
Doth not the memory of a similar fate
Unlock the fastenings of the heart to pity's cry?
How much more mine! In them I see myself.
Before the altar I myself have trembled,
And early death in solemn state stood o'er
Me kneeling; then the knife was raised aloft
To pierce the bosom throbbing with young blood;
A whirl of horror terrified my soul,
My sight grew dim, and—I was saved at last.
Are we not bound to render to th' unhappy
What gods so graciously have granted us?
Thou knowest it is so, thou knowest me,
And yet thou wouldst constrain me!

Thoas.

Submit unto thine office, not thy king.

Iph.

Forbear! Gloze not with words that violence,
Which o'er a woman's weakness doth exult.
I am free-born, as free as any man.
If Agamemnon's son now stood before thee,
And thou shouldst then demand what was not fit,
He too would have a sword and have an arm,
To vindicate his nearest, dearest right.
Nothing but words have I, and it befits
A noble man, to honor woman's word.

Thoas.

I honor it more than a brother's sword.

Iph.

The chance of arms doth ever change about;
No prudent fighter doth his foe belittle:
And nature hath not left the weak defenceless

Against the pride and hauteur of the strong ;
She grants him joy in cunning and deceit ;
Soon he escapes, delays and circumvents.
The mighty ones of earth deserve no less.

Thoas. But wise precaution doth forestall deceit.

Iph. And an unblemished soul doth want it not.

Thoas. Take care that thou dost not condemn thyself.

Iph. Oh, couldst thou see my spirit, how it strives
With might to turn aside, in'ts first assault,
Malignant fate, which bears upon it hard !
Stand I then here all weaponless against thee ?
The fascinating plea, the charming branch
Which in a woman's hand more potent is
Than sword and shield, thou dost reject. What now
Remains to me as my soul's last defence ?
Call I the goddess to perform a wonder ?
Is there no strength within my soul's depths more ?

Thoas. It seems the fate of these two strangers gives
Thee measureless concern. Who are they, pray,
For whom thy soul so mightily is moved ?

Iph. They are—they seem—I take it, they are Greeks.

Thoas. Thy countrymen, are they ? And they, no doubt,
Revive within thy breast the cherished image
Of thy return ?

Iph. (*After a pause.*)

Is then the right to wondrous deeds bestowed
On man alone ? Hath he alone the power
To attain and clasp to his heroic breast
Th' impossible ? What then do we call great ?
What is it that strikes terror in the soul
When we absorb the oft repeated tale,
But th' improbable result of what

The most courageous man began? He who
In darkest night, alone, glides like a snake
Up to the enemy encamped, asleep,—
How unawares a flame devouring wraps
The sleepers and the waking, and at last,
On all sides pressed by the awakened ones,
He turns to flee on foeman's steed, yet still
With booty laden,—is then such an one
Alone to have all praise? And he alone,
Who, safety's way despising, boldly goes
To rove o'er mountains and through forests dense,
That he may rid the region 'round of robbers?
Is nothing left for us? Must tender woman
Forego her inborn right, a savage be
Against a savage turned, like Amazons
To rob you of the sword and to avenge
Oppression with your blood? Within my breast
A bold adventure heaves and falls in waves:
If it miscarries, I shall not escape
Severe reproach and most disastrous ill;
Here at your feet, ye gods, I lay it down!
If ye are true, as ye are held to be,
Then show it by your aid and glorify
The truth through me!—Yea, understand, oh king,
A secret fraud is being now devised;
In vain thou wilt inquire for the captives;
They are departed hence and seek their friends,
Who at the ship are waiting on the shore.
The elder, he who struggled here in throes
Of madness, now set free,—Orestes is,
My brother, and his confidant the other,
Friend of his youth, and Pylades by name.

Apollo sent them forth from Delphi's shrine
Unto this shore with the divine command
To plunder hence the image of Diana
And hence to him the sister to convey ;
This task performed, he promises to him
Whom Furies follow and maternal blood
Pollutes, deliverance. Now both of us,
The last of Tantal's house, I have delivered
Into thy hand : destroy us—if you dare.

Thoas. And thinkest thou, the savage Scythian,
The rude barbarian, will lend an ear
To truth and to humanity, whose voice
The Grecian Atreus did never heed?

Iph. 'Tis heard by every one beneath the sky
Wherever born, in whom the springs of life
Flow pure and unobstructed through the breast,—
What purpose touching me dost thou, oh king,
Revolve in silence in thine inmost soul?
Is it destruction? So then slay me first!
For now I do perceive, since there remains
For us no rescue more, the jeopardy
Most horrible, whereunto I o'er-rash
Designedly have hurried my beloved.
Woe! I shall see them bound before my eyes!
With what a glance can I take leave of him,
My brother, whom I send to death? Ne'ermore
Can I look into his beloved eyes!

Thoas. Thus have the clever and designing twain
Thrown such a web around the head of her,
The long-secluded one, who lightly gave
A willing ear to all their hopes and wishes!

Iph. No! No! Oh, king! I might have been deceived,

But these are faithful, these are true. If thou
Shalt find them otherwise, then let them fall
And cast me out and banish me disgraced
To gloomy shore of some deserted isle,
There to endure my folly's punishment.
But if this man should prove to be my brother
For whom I've prayed so long and whom I love,
Then let us go in peace, be friendly then
To him, my brother, as thou art to me.
My father fell through Clytæmnestra's guilt
And she through her own son. The final hope
Of Atreus' line doth rest on him alone.
Let me with a clean heart and a clean hand
Pass over hence and purify our house.
Thou gavest me thy word! If e'er for me
Should be prepared a way unto my own,
Thou swarest me to let me go; and now
It is. A king speaks not like vulgar men
Confusedly, the suppliant for the nonce
To send away; but if by any chance
He promises what he does not expect,
Then feels he first the power of his worth,
When he can fill the expectant one with joy.

Thoas. As fire with water strives in combat fierce
And seething seeks t' annihilate his foe,
So furiously doth anger in my breast
Resist thy words.

Iph. Oh, let the flame of grace,
E'en like the holy light which mildly burns
In sacrificial fire, encircled 'round
With songs of praise and thanks and joy, ascend
To me.

Thoas. How oft this voice hath soothed my soul !
Iph. Oh, offer me thy hand in pledge of peace.
Thoas. Thou askest much in a short space of time.
Iph. We need no time to halt to do what's good.
Thoas. Great deal ! for e'en from good doth evil spring.
Iph. 'Tis doubt alone that turneth good to ill.
Pause not to think, but act as thou dost feel.

SCENE IV. *The former.* ORESTES, *armed.*

Orestes. (*Behind the scenes.*)

Increase your forces ! Hold them back !
A few more moments ! Yield not to their numbers
And cover well the way unto the ship
For me and sister !

(*To Iphigenia, without observing the king.*)

Come, we are betrayed.
But little space remains to us for flight. Quick !

(*He sees the king.*)

Thoas. (*Reaching for his sword.*)

Here in my presence none doth wield
His naked sword unpunished.

Iph.

Do not profane
The goddess' dwelling-place through rage and blood.
Command your people to stand still, and hear
The priestess, hear the sister !

Orestes.

Tell me then !
Who is't, that threatens us ?

Iph.

Revere in him

The king, a second father he to me !
Forgive me brother ; yet my simple heart
Hath placed our fate entirely in his hands.
I have confessed to him your plot and saved
My soul from treachery.

Orestes.

Doth he intend

To grant us safe return thus peaceably ?

Iph. Your glittering sword forbids me to respond.

Orestes. (*Sheathing his sword.*)

So speak ! thou seest I have obeyed thy words.

SCENE V. *The former.* PYLADES, followed by ARKAS.
Both with drawn swords.

Pylad. Delay not ! We our forces have combined
For the last stand and yielding step by step
Are being slowly forced unto the sea.
What parley of the princess find I here !
This is their king's most honored head.

Arkas. With calmness, as beseemeth thee, oh king,
Thou standest 'gainst thine enemies. Now soon
Their rashness will receive chastisement due ;
Their party yields and falls, their ship is ours.
One word from thee and it will be in flames.

Thoas. Away ! Command our people to stand still !
Let none molest the foe, whilst we are speaking.

Orestes. The like will I. Go, trusty friend, and gather
The rest of all our band ; bid them be still,
Whilst here we learn what end the gods appoint
To our endeavors.

SCENE VI. IPHIGENIA. THOAS. ORESTES.

Iph. Now first before you speak, relieve my mind
Of all anxiety. I fear sore strife
If thou, oh king, wilt not the gentle voice
Of equity regard and, thou, my brother,
Wilt not restrain th' impetuous fire of youth.

Thoas. I will restrain my anger, as befits
The elder. Answer me! What proof hast thou
To show, that thou art Agamemnon's son
And this one's brother true?

Orestes. Here is the sword
With which he slew the bravest men of Troy.
This took I from his murderer and prayed
The gods to lend to me the valour, strength
And fortune of the great and mighty king
And grant to me a death more honorable.
Choose now a noble from thy mighty host
And let me stand in combat 'gainst the best.
As far as earth heroic sons doth bear
No stranger is denied this proof of strength.

Thoas. This privilege hath ne'er been granted here
To any stranger.

Orestes. Then from thee and me
Henceforth let custom be begun anew!
By all men everywhere the noble act
Of rulers is revered and held as law.
And let me not contend for freedom only,
Let me, a stranger, for the strangers fight!
Fall I, then is their sentence with mine own
Pronounced; but if my fortune is to win,
Then may no man upon this shore e'er tread,

To whom shall be denied the rapid glance
Of sympathetic love, and comforted
Let each one hence depart !

Thoas.

Thou seemest not,

Oh youth, unworthy of the ancestors
Of whom thou mak'st thy boast. Great is the count
Of noble, valiant men who follow me ;
Yet I myself with all my years can still
Maintain mine own against the foe and I
Am ready now to hazard all with thee
In chance of arms.

Iph.

No ! No ! There is no need,

Oh king, of bloody argument like this !
Draw not thy sword, but think of me and mine !
The rash encounter doth immortalize
A man : when he doth fall, he's praised in song.
But no posterity doth count the tears
Unending of the widow left forsaken ;
The bard is silent of the thousand days
And nights in weeping passed, where some calm soul
Consumes itself with care in the vain hope
Of calling back again the long lost friend
So rashly torn away. Myself hath care
Forewarned not to be drawn from safe retreat
By any fraud of robber and betrayed
To servitude. With diligence have I
Examined them, each circumstance explored,
Demanded proofs, and now my heart is sure.
See here on his right hand the mark, resembling
Three stars, which on the very day appeared,
When he was born, and which the priest declared
Betokened heavy deeds, to be performed

By this same hand. Then doubly doth convince me
This scar, which cleaves his eye-brow here. When he
Was yet a child, Electra rash and heedless,
As was her wont, dropped him from out her arms.
He struck a tripod as he fell—'Tis he—
Shall I yet name his likeness to his father,
Shall I the inward leaping of my heart
Adduce to thee as proof of my assurance?

Thoas. And if thy speech removed each lingering doubt,
And if I tamed the anger in my breast,
Yet were it needful that the sword decide
Between us. Peace I see not. They are come,
Thou hast thyself acknowledged it to me,
To rob me of the goddess' sacred image.
Think'st thou that I with apathy can see this?
The Greek doth often turn his eager eyes
To treasures of barbarians far remote,
The golden fleece, their steeds and fairest daughters ;
Yet force and cunning have not always led
Them safely back with goods thus coveted.

Orestes. The image shall not sunder us, oh king !
For now we do perceive the veil of error
Which a divinity spread o'er our heads
When he commanded us to wander hither.
Him I besought for counsel and release
From the fell Furies' company : he spoke :
" Bringst thou the sister who on Tauris' shore,
Within the sanctuary stays perforce,
To Grecian land, the curse will be removed."
We construed it to mean Apollo's sister,
And he intended thee ! The cruel bands
Are now dissolved ; thou art, thou holy one,

Again restored to thine. Touched by thy hand
 I was made whole, was healed ; in thy embrace
 The frenzy seized me in his every claw
 For the last time and all my marrow shook
 Most terribly ; then like a snake it fled
 Into its cave. Through thee I now enjoy
 Anew the universal light of day.
 Most fair and glorious now to me appear
 The purposes divine. The goddess took thee,
 Protectress of our house, and hid thee safe,
 E'en like a sacred image, whereunto
 The city's fate immutably is bound
 In mystery of oracle divine ;
 Sequestered thee in holy quietude
 To bless thy brother and thine own to bless.
 When all salvation seemed forever lost
 On the wide earth, thou giv'st us all again.
 Now let thy thoughts return to peace, oh king !
 Oppose her not, now that she doth intend
 To consecrate th' paternal home anew,
 Restore me to the halls now freed from curse,
 And press upon my brow the ancient crown !
 Requite the blessing which she brought to thee,
 And let a nearer privilege be mine !
 Both force and craft, the highest boast of men,
 Are through the truth of this exalted soul
 Brought down to shame, and pure and child-like trust
 In an illustrious man will be rewarded.
Iph. Bethink thee of thy promise and be moved
 By this same speech so justly, truly spoken !
 Behold us here ! Not often art thou given
 Occasion for a noble deed like this.

Thou canst refuse it not ; then grant it soon.

Thoas. So go !

Iph. Not so, my king ! Without a blessing,
In anger, I can never part from thee.
Proscribe us not ! Let there proceed from thee
To us a friendly hospitality ;
So we will not forever be estranged
And separated. Worthy and most dear,
As was my father, so art thou to me,
And this impression will remain with me.
If e'er the lowliest of thy people bring
Unto mine ear the sound of that same voice
Which I was ever wont to hear in thee,
And in the poorest I behold thy kin :
I will receive him like a god, I will
Myself prepare a couch for him, invite
Him to a seat beside the cheerful hearth,
Inquire but of thee and thy estate.
Oh, may the gods grant thee well-earned reward
For all thy noble deeds and tenderness !
Farewell ! Oh, turn to us and give me back
But one kind word e'er we forever part !
More gently than the wind will swell our sails,
More softly flow the tears from straining eyes
As we depart. Farewell ! Extend to me
In pledge of old acquaintance thy right hand.

Thoas. Farewell !

